

News & Views

Utah's 2002 Public Health Heroes/Heroines

The theme of Public Health Month 2002, "Utah's Public Health is for Everybody, Everyday and Everywhere," reminds us of the broad reach of public health in the everyday lives of Utahns. But, when public health is at its best, we often don't know it's there working for us. Consequently, many Utahns are unaware of the many hours of hard work and dedication that go into making Utah a healthy state. Who are the people behind the success of public health? In recognition of those who dedicate their lives to public health, the Utah Public Health Association (UPHA) and the Utah Department of Health are pleased to announce Utah's 2002 Public Health Heroes/Heroines:

Public Health Hero Organization

The University of Utah Clinic at South Main Public Health Center collaboration with the Salt Lake Valley Health Department and Dr. Karen Buchi



Jody McGrew, RN, BSN, Karen Buchi, MD, and Kristy Cottrell, RN, BSN.

The University Clinic at the South Main Public Health Center provided 6,600 pediatric visits during the year 2001. This program demonstrates a successful merger of academics and public health in the seamless delivery of comprehensive pediatric services with a focus on state of the art medicine delivered in a culturally sensitive manner.

The population served by this clinic is primarily underinsured or uninsured children of the community. A large number of these children are Hispanic with multiple medical needs and few resources. Through the tireless efforts of Dr. Buchi and her colleagues this clinic offers a library, on-site pharmacy, promotora (or lay educator) services, and highest quality residency training. All services are provided on a sliding fee bases so that no child need be deprived of services based upon ability to pay.

With concern about literacy and language levels of clients, a library was created to provide a book for each child and library services for the families and clients attending the South Main Clinic. This effort will have a lasting impact on these children and families.

Using donated funds, medications have been purchased and distributed

through the on-site pharmacy. Previously families often were unable to fill needed prescriptions for medications essential to treatment due to lack of funds. This pharmacy now ensures that needed medications are affordable and available to those families needing assistance.

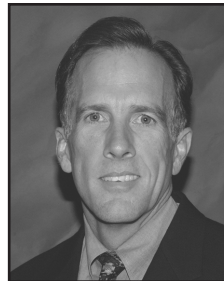
The promotoras have provided much needed support and education to families. These women work with families to reduce barriers, such as transportation, identification of community resources that would benefit the families and translation of instructions and recommendations. This is a service that utilizes non-medical staff to provide services in the client's native language in a culturally sensitive manner.

This pediatric residency program benefits the community while providing highest quality medical training. Each pediatric resident receives training that incorporates public health principles by linking clients into wrap around services such as immunizations, family planning, WIC, public health nursing or other programs provided by the Salt Lake Valley Health Department. As these pediatric residents complete their training they have a thorough understanding of public health which they take with them out into the community as they set up their own independent practices of medicine.

Although the physicians and residents of this clinic are not public health employees, each person constantly addresses public health issues at each and every clinic visit. Dr. Buchi has personally championed the cause of public health with ongoing grants and efforts to continue to expand and enhance the services to the clients of this clinic. Thanks to Dr. Buchi and the clinic staff for their tireless efforts on behalf of public health and the children of this community. UTH

Public Health Hero Employee Scott Williams, Deputy Director, Utah Department of Health

Dr. Scott Williams, MPH, Deputy Director of the Utah Department of Health, is UPHA's Public Health Hero Employee. Scott has dedicated his



life to making Utah a healthy State. As a teacher, a revered pediatrician, a husband and father of three, a leader, organizer and a public health champion, Scott spends each day in the service of others.

Over the past three years Scott has led through chairmanship of the Salt Lake Organizing Committee's A Healthier Your 2002™ community health initiative. Through his leadership a new program was born into the International Olympic Committee's family of programs and will likely be carried to future Olympic organizing committees. As the first comprehensive health promotion program associated with the Olympics, the program secured outside funding and garnered 15 community partners. Through the combined efforts of program director Connie Kitchens and the vision of Scott, A Healthier Your 2002™ brought the spirit of health to Utah citizens through the development of physical activity, nutrition, health behaviors and safety initiatives.

Scott's service to public health during the Olympics didn't stop there. He led the Utah Department of Health's Olympic planning, response and implementation effort as well as serving on the Steering Committee of the Environmental and Public Health Alliance. He knew the ways in which public health would be expected to respond and how it needed to be part of the safety network. He has put so much of himself behind the success of the games in protecting public health, that like so many other public health jobs, the public never sees what a great job he did—and that is because he did a great job!

Many other vital public health programs that he oversees on a daily basis excel from his leadership. He has spearheaded the Patient Safety Rule by securing more than a million dollars in funding to assist in its implementation. Scott has also led the development of Utah's Statewide Immunization Information System (USIIS), a voluntary vaccine delivery tracking system with more than a half a million records on file! He has also spent countless hours practicing medicine at

the Salt Lake Valley Health Department's South Main Clinical collaboration with the University of Utah.

He commented recently that he never thought that going to medical school would put him in such a variety of unique and challenging situations. The truth is medical school didn't do it—he did! He is known for seeing a hole and figuring out a way to plug it. He makes sure it's the right plug, sticks around to make sure it takes hold and makes sure the person who plugged the hole is recognized.

He has made a great impact on numerous employees of the Utah Department of Health, the health community and the citizens of Utah through his solid leadership and passion for improving the health of Utahns. Congratulations Scott! UTH

Utah Public Health — It's for Everybody, Everyday, Everywhere

Ten Great Public Health Achievements in the 20th Century

When the average person is asked what public health is and how it has benefited them, the response is often "I don't know." The majority of Americans are unaware or simply haven't noticed the effect public health has had in their lives. The fact is, public health has added 25 years to the life expectancy of people in the United States in this century.

Put simply, public health affects everybody, everyday, and everywhere.

In honor of April's Public Health Month, the Utah Public Health Association (UPHA) wants to share with Utahns the value of public health. The following list, created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), highlights the Ten Great Public Health Achievements in the 20th Century and reminds us of how far public health has come and exactly what public health does for every individual.

The choices for topics for this list were based on the opportunity for prevention and the impact on death, illness, and disability in the United States and are not ranked by order of importance.

1. Vaccination – The practice of vaccination has resulted in the eradication of smallpox; elimination of poliomyelitis in the America; and control of measles, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, Haemophilus influenzae type b, and other infectious diseases in the United States and other parts of the world.

2. Motor-vehicle safety – Improvements in motor-vehicle safety have resulted from engineering efforts to make both vehicles and highways safer and from successful efforts to change personal behavior (e.g., increased use of safety belts, child safety seats, and motorcycle helmets and

Public Health Month

Public Health Heroine Employee

Georgina Nowak, Southeastern Utah Health Department

Georgina Nowak, a community health educator at the Southeastern Utah Health Department, was also chosen as UPHA's Public Health Heroine Employee.



According to Georgina's colleagues, she has unique insight and is able to recognize needs in the communities and counties where she works. Southeastern Health District is a melting pot of many different cultures and Georgina has the unique ability to work effectively with the different and specific needs of each.

Georgina works in many different facets of public health. A few of these include working with nurses doing Worksite Health Fairs at the coalmines and power plants, implementing highway safety projects, promoting 5 A Day, and producing anti-tobacco commercials. This often involves long days beginning at 3am and ending at 7pm. She often works Saturdays teaching care-giver classes for the elderly and doing car seat checks for children.

Georgina is also passionate about tobacco education. She helps to enforce the Indoor Clean Air Act, conducts the tobacco buys with the youth, and teaches the END classes for court ordered youth.

One of Georgina's proudest accomplishments is the Senior Safety Program.

The program involves a self-completed safety survey of a home to address injury prevention and to make the home a safer place for the patient and/or to prevent injury to the caregiver. The program provides toilet risers, walkers, shower chairs, transfer benches, canes, and tub-grab bars on a lending basis. Many people in this program are recovering from knee or hip surgery or have other long-term health conditions. The program assists in providing a safer environment that allows the patient to remain in their own home, rather than enter a nursing home.

Georgina is also active in many outside organizations including the American

Cancer Society, United Way, Life Line Pregnancy Assistance and Support Center, Domestic Violence Coalition, Safe Kids Coalition, and Triad (a committee of law enforcement and aging programs to protect seniors from fraud). She also teaches at the College of Eastern Utah and AARP Defensive Driving Classes.

Everything Georgina does benefits health promotion and health education in our communities, counties, and state. She is truly a mover and a shaker and gets projects accomplished. She is not afraid to work hard and she is persistent in the programs and projects in which she believes. Southeastern Utah wouldn't be as healthy without her! **UTH**

decreased drinking and driving). These efforts have contributed to large reductions in motor-vehicle-related deaths.

3. Safer workplaces – Work-related health problems, such as coal workers' pneumoconiosis (black lung), and silicosis—common at the beginning of the century—have come under better control. Severe injuries and deaths related to mining, manufacturing, construction, and transportation also have decreased; since 1980, safer workplaces have resulted in a reduction of approximately 40% in the rate of fatal occupational injuries.

4. Control of infectious diseases – Control of infectious diseases has resulted from clean water and improved sanitation. Infections such as typhoid and cholera transmitted by contaminated water, a major cause of illness and death early in the 20th century, have been reduced dramatically by improved sanitation. In addition, the discovery of antimicrobial therapy has been critical to successful public health efforts to control infections such as tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

5. Decline in deaths from coronary heart disease and stroke – Decline in deaths from coronary heart disease and stroke have resulted from risk-factor modification, such as smoking cessation and blood pressure control coupled with improved access to early detection and better treatment. Since 1972, death rates for coronary heart disease have decreased 51%.

6. Safer and healthier foods – Since 1900, safer and healthier foods have resulted from decreases in microbial contamination and increases in nutritional content. Identifying essential micronutrients and establishing food-fortification programs have almost eliminated major nutritional deficiency diseases such as rickets, goiter, and pellagra in the United States.

7. Healthier mothers and babies – Healthier mothers and babies have resulted from

better hygiene and nutrition, availability of antibiotics, greater access to health care, and technologic advances in maternal and neonatal medicine. Since 1900, infant mortality has decreased 90%, and maternal mortality has decreased 99%.

8. Family planning – Access to family planning and contraceptive services has altered social and economic roles of women. Family planning has provided health benefits such as smaller family size and longer interval between the birth of children; increased opportunities for preconceptional counseling and screening; fewer infant, child, and maternal deaths; and the use of barrier contraceptives to prevent pregnancy and transmission of human immunodeficiency virus and other STDs.

9. Fluoridation of drinking water– Fluoridation of drinking water began in 1945 and in 1999 reached an estimated 144 million persons in the United States. Fluoridation safely and inexpensively benefits both children and adults by effectively preventing tooth decay, regardless of socioeconomic status or access to care. Fluoridation has played an important role in the reductions in tooth decay (40%-70% in children) and of tooth loss in adults (40%-60%).

10. Recognition of tobacco use as a health hazard – Recognition of tobacco use as a health hazard and subsequent public health anti-smoking campaigns have resulted in changes in social norms to prevent initiation of tobacco use, promote cessation of use, and reduce exposure to environmental tobacco smoke. Since the 1964 Surgeon General's report on the health risks of smoking, the prevalence of smoking among adults has decreased, and millions of smoking-related deaths have been prevented.

Material provided by the Utah Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention **UTH**

Public Health Heroine in the Community

Patricia Jones, Representative, Utah State Legislature, District 40

Patricia Jones, a partner in the marketing research company, Dan Jones and Associates, is a field director in the market



research industry and has been involved in many facets of public opinion research. She is experienced in data analysis and questionnaire development, and has extensive training and experience in moderating focus groups (qualitative research). Patricia also serves as a representative in the Utah State House of Representatives. In an effort to effectively advance her commitment to improve nutrition in schools, last year she became involved with the Alliance for Cardiovascular Health in Utah—School Nutrition and Physical Activity Workgroup. Through the support of this workgroup, Ms. Jones sponsored three bills during the 2002 legislative session related to school nutrition:

HB0200 and HB0200SI (substitute bill): Nutrition in Schools

1) An elementary school may not sell, or allow to be sold, through vending machines on premises accessible to students, food products other than water, milk or 100% fruit juice.

2) A secondary school shall ensure that less than 50% of overall food offerings in vending machines, on the schools premises are foods of minimal nutritional value.

HB0228: Public Education of Vending Contracts

Using a standardized reporting form, requires each local school board to collect data and compile an annual report on vending machine contracts entered by public schools. The report would identify contracting parties; length of contract; financial terms and all in kind and cash contributions.

Promoting vending legislation has not been an easy task. Concerned about lost revenue, soft drink companies have expressed strong opposition for requiring healthier vending. Although schools and principals believe students should have healthier offerings, they too are concerned about losing money that currently supports under-funded programs such as music; field trips; and sports. Other legislators are reluctant to support these bills because of the current political attitude favoring local control, making state mandates unpopular. In spite of this resistance, Patricia is still forging ahead to improve school nutrition. With obesity rates growing at epidemic levels, even among children, she won't give up. With at least 20 other states working on vending legislation, advocacy for improving vending machine offerings will continue to grow. This year is only the beginning of a cause Patricia is willing to champion until improvements are made. **UTH**